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BANA Announces Results of NUBS Evaluation

The Braille Authority of North America, (BANA) has concluded a two-year evaluation study of the Nemeth Uniform Braille System (NUBS). BANA will publish the complete results of the study on its website in late February.

NUBS is an outgrowth of the Nemeth Braille Code of Mathematics and Science Notation, which was first published in 1965. Its developer, Dr. Abraham Nemeth, reports that this new system has been in development for ten years and is capable of rendering both literary and technical texts.

The evaluation of NUBS was handled by BANA's Braille Research Committee, which employed several research strategies including timed reading tests, focus groups, and a questionnaire based on a sampler of various texts written in NUBS. Dr. Frances Mary D'Andrea and Dr. Diane Wormsley, Co-Chairs of the research committee, shared preliminary statements that reflect the results of the committee's evaluation of NUBS:

- An examination of reading speed was conducted using the measure of characters per second. The results of the examination provided some limited evidence that NUBS was slower in general than current braille codes.
- The results of the sampler questionnaire suggested that, while people who reviewed the sampler found text written in NUBS generally not difficult to read, opinions expressed in the responses to the NUBS questionnaire as well as open-ended comments that were included by participants were generally much more negative than positive.

- Positive comments about NUBS included reference to the concept of a single code rather than three separate ones; ease of learning due to familiarity with Nemeth; preference for dropped numbers; and potential for increasing the accuracy of transcription into braille. Negative comments included the increased bulk of NUBS compared to the current code; lack of necessity for changes since the current code works well; dislike for certain symbols of NUBS such as the modes; cumbersomeness of NUBS for writing; and concern about needing to show all the print indicators. Other questions and concerns raised included the potential impact on children learning braille and on current braille readers, particularly adults; the cost of implementation; the cost of producing books; the fact that no other country is considering the use of NUBS; and the lack of transcribers and teachers who know NUBS.

When the complete evaluation report is posted on its website, BANA will send a notification to the subscribers of the BANA-Announce e-mail list that disseminates official BANA information. To join this one-way e-mail list, send a blank email message to bana-announce-subscribe@brailleauthority.org and follow the directions in the confirmation email that will be sent in response.

For additional resource information, visit www.brailleauthority.org

The mission and purpose of the Braille Authority of North America are to assure literacy for tactile readers through the standardization of braille and/or tactile graphics. BANA promotes and facilitates the use, teaching, and production of braille. It publishes rules, interprets, and renders opinions pertaining to braille in all existing codes. It deals with codes now in existence or to be developed in the future, in collaboration with other countries using English braille. In exercising its function and authority, BANA considers the effects of its decisions on other existing braille codes and formats; the ease of production by various methods; and acceptability to readers.